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ABSTRACT

Despite scientific inattention to the implications of control expectancy in adult education, particularly in the community college setting, a few strategies have been suggested to effect external to internal shifts in control expectancies in nontraditional adult learners. The Reimanis and Schaefer technique assists the subject to focus upon the contingencies of his/her behavior and to recognize the causal relationship involved. Dua's strategy involves an individual action program where the student is aided in identifying significant others or forces, resulting in increased ability to formulate specific actions to expand his/her control over behavior and behavioral change. Master's strategy seeks to alter the adult student's attitudes and perceptions of his/her behavior, thus enabling the individual to categorize his/her response to a potentially external situation as being internally directed. The Roueche and Mink strategy helps the student to focus attention on the desired behavior and pay-off, identify behavioral consequences and make value judgements about them, carry out the plan, and maintain a perception of the internally controlled event through positive reinforcement. These are only starting points in the search for effective psychometric instruments and control expectancy strategies for adult locus of control change. (LH)

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ADULT LEARNERS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: THE POVERTY OF CONTROL EXPECTANCY RESEARCH

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The community college serves a variety of post-secondary educational needs and clients which traditional four-year colleges cannot or will not (Thornton, 1972). Among its unique functions, a committment to continuing education has assumed increasing importance in recent years. Technological innovation has bolstered the quantity of leisure time and made job related skills obsolete at a faster rate. This in turn has induced more adults to re-enter education either for personal development or to retrain in new skills areas (Lord and Miller, 1973). Because of this influx in adult learners, the National Advisory Committee on Extension and Continuing Education (1975) has urgently called for a national policy on life-long learning centered in the community college. But as community college analyst Arthur M. Cohen (1975, p. 65) notes, little has truly been done to assist adult learners in successfully re-entering or performing in higher education. Given this well-defined need, it is surprising that little has been done to relate Rotter's basic theory of control expectancy (1954) to adult learning, in the community college context or otherwise.

The intent of this paper will be to indicate the potential value of internal control expectancy to adult education, and to briefly identify four proposed strategies for precipitating control expectancy shifts for non-traditional students, among which adults figure prominently. It is well understood that research has all but ignored the study of adult learning in a community college setting. It is hoped that on the basis of

this paper educational psychologists may be exposed to the research void in adult locus of control studies, and conduct subsequent investigations so as to have direct application in the largest adult learning market -- the community college.

Rotter developed from social learning theory a concept of internal-external control of reinforcement which describes the extent to which an individual sees the contingency between reinforcements or payoffs and his own behavior (1954). This internal-external personality variable is concerned with the degree to which individuals accept personal responsibility for what happens to them. Rotter labeled this individual perception "locus of control" and developed the Internal-External scale (Rotter, 1966) to measure it.

Rotter (1966) further postulated that the development of an individual's locus of control orientation depends upon the person's reinforcement history, i.e., the ability to distinguish causal relationships between his actions and successes or failures. Through his reinforcement history, expectations are established by the person about the contingencies between specific behaviors and outcomes. The extensive body of research into Rotter's control expectancy construct has generally supported this theory (Joe, 1971).

The degree of internality or externality in students has been consistently linked with their academic success (McGhee and Crandall, 1968; Nowicki and Roundtree, 1971; Boer, 1973). Externally oriented persons who do not perceive the contingency

between their behavior and its outcome feel powerless in the control of their lives. Confronted with an academic or non-academic task, the external is willing to resign the outcome to fate, luck or powerful other forces unrelated to her behavior. They are less likely to "try" -- not because they don't want to do better, but because they have built up a reinforcement history that precludes personal responsibility for outcomes (Roueche and Mink, 1976a, p. 33). To the external, failure to pass a test is not interpreted in terms of her lack of studying; rather the test would be viewed as "impossible" or the external might simply conclude that the "teacher failed me".(Kaiser, 1975)

The internal, on the other hand, carries a high self-image, is more achievement oriented, open to new learning experiences, has higher grades, shows greater initiative, adjusts better to adversity, and is more flexible (Powell and Vega, 1972). The evidence indicates that internals are more willing to manifest interest in achievement related activities because of their sense of personal control; i.e., internal control expectancy (Lao, 1970). In this respect, the ability to master one's own environment and succeed in academic settings appears to be more closely related to a person's expectation regarding her ability to succeed than it is to "motivation" as the word is commonly used. Motivation -- the basis of action -- becomes simply a function of one's belief in one's ability to succeed

at obtaining a desired goal (Roueche and Mink, 1975). Hence, control expectancy becomes a crucial variable in instructional efficacy.

The bibliographies on locus of control clearly document the degree to which research has overlooked the implications of control expectancy in adult education (Joe, 1971; Rotter, Chance and Phares, 1972; Prociuk and Lussier, 1975). To aggravate this shortcoming, few studies have ever been undertaken with adults as subjects and the community college as the experimental setting (Schroeder, 1966). Therefore, community college analysts have proposed to educators and administrators alike a strategic imperitive for effective adult education. As Roueche and Mink (1976b, p. 6) stated it:

> The challenge faced by community college instructors and counselors is to aid these [non-traditional] students in the realization of control in their lives and in the expectation of succeeding rather than failing. Helping to develop an internal locus of control orientation in students is one key to facilitating student success.

Although control expectancy as it relates to adult education remains a virtually untouched field, strides have been taken to facilitate future researchers in investigating the construct vis a vis adult learning. A major breakthrough appears in the adaptation of Rotter's widely used I-E measurement scale (1966) to ameliorate its multi-dimensionality and to render it more suitable for adult application. The Rotter scale had received major criticism for confounding

different types of locus of control, its difficult reading level, and its confusing interrelationship with social desirability factors (Mirels, 1970; Joe, 1971). Powell and Vega (1972) upgraded the vocabulary of the Rotter I-E scale and slightly modified the content of survey questions to align them more specifically to adult control perceptions.

A more recent adaptation showing very favorable psychometric characteristics is the Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Scale for Adults (ANS-IE, Nowicki and Duke, 1974). Based on the earlier Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Scale (Nowicki and Strickland, 1973), the authors changed all words designating "children" to "people", and altered some verb tenses to more complex conjugated forms suited for adult-level reading. Initial indications are that the ANS-IE scale provides an effective measure of adult control expectancy. However, even though improved test instruments have been devised, so little research has been undertaken with adult I-E scales that comprehensive evaluations of their overall effectiveness are as yet inconclusive (Joe, 1971).

Despite the scientific inattention to adult control expectancy and its corrollate applications in education, a small number of strategies have been suggested to effect shifts in control expectancies from external to internal points of reference in this variety of student (MacDonald, 1972). It must be noted that the specific emphases of the below-mentioned

techniques were not specifically directed at the adult community college learner, but rather, at the "non-traditional" student in general. Included in that generic classification would be the adult student, the academically unprepared student, the mentally disadvantaged or slightly retarded learner, and a broad variety of other types not conceived as "typical" by the general public. Although couched in terms of counseling strategies, the authors have rendered these control expectancy modules adaptable for use by classroom instructors if such educators are thoroughly versed in the theory and procedure each strategy embraces.

The underlying objective behind the modules is to assist the external in recognizing the contingencies between her behavior and elements in her environment, help her move toward a more internal perception of control, and thus increase the efficiency and effectiveness of her behaviors -- academic or otherwise (Roueche and Mink, 1976a, p. 13). The Reimanis and Schaefer (1970) technique is directed entirely at getting the subject to focus upon the contingencies of her behavior and recognizing the causal relationship involved. The instructor challenges external statements ("The alarm clock made me miss class") while rewarding or encouraging internal statements ("I was simply late for class"). Through repeated sensitizing to internally directed operations, a reinforcement history may be established leading to extinction of external control expectancies.

Dua (1970) postulates that the attitudes of externally directed students are rooted in past histories of failure. They lack confidence in the ability to succeed on their own merits because they have never learned efficient methods of producing change. Dua's strategy involves an individual action program, where the external is aided by the instructor in identifying significant others or forces. The instructor will then aid the student in formulating specific actions to expand the individual's control over behavior and behaviorial change. Dua's research offers persuasive support to Rotter's (1966) contention that control expectancy appears responsive to client success in making behavioral changes and achieving personal growth. The major limitation apparent in the Dua approach is the individual basis upon which it must be administered. Hence, as a precipitator of control expectancy modification for large numbers of adult students, its application would be cumbersome at best.

A third strategy for shifting control expectancy does not directly seek to alter adult student behavior, but rather, to alter the client's attitudes or perception of her behavior so that the individual will categorize her response to a potentially external situation as being internally directed. Masters' (1970) technique might be exemplified by the student whose instructor comports himself in a strict pedagogical demeanor: the teacher expects absolute student obedience and utmost

performance. Masters would suggest that instructors or counselors aid the student in viewing success at an academic task not as a response to the uncompromising teacher (the external locus of control) but instead as a means by which the student can perform well and receive positive reinforcements (recognition and teacher approval) for her behavior. In this sense, the internally controlled student altered her perception of control locus, recognized the contingency between her behavior and consequent payoffs, and in fact used her internally directed behavior to control the instructor's response to her favorable academic performance. After repeated attribution of success to internal control expectancy, her individual external orientation will move toward extinction while the internal locus is reinforced (Pharos and Lamiell, 1975).

The strategies thusfar mentioned offer few systematic operational specifics for assisting adult learners in perceiving contingency relationships between their actions and subsequent outcomes. The most comprehensive plan for re-orientating external control expectancy appears in the composite counseling strategy devised by Roueche and Mink (1976a). Based on earlier control expectancy modules by the same authors (Mink, 1971; 1975; Roueche and Mink, 1975), Roueche and Mink have devised a multifaceted control shift strategy that thusfar has produced encouraging results in more than thirty community colleges (Schultz, 1977).

The basis of the Roueche-Mink strategy derives from the Rotter (1966) hypothesis that the impact of social reinforcement depends on the extent to which the individual can relate her own behavior to the reinforcement. Also, the authors appeal to Williams' (1970) suggestion that locus of control as a social learning variable can best be manipulated in a group setting.

The Roueche-Mink strategy (1976a) employs a multi-phased approach where the instructor/counselor (1) focuses student attention on the behavior desired as well as the intended payoff, (2) calls upon the student to identify consequences of such behavior and make a value judgement ("What do you want?"), (3) allows the student to carry out that plan (accepting no excuses and metting out no punishment for failure), and (4, assists the student in maintaining a perception of the causal operation (i.e., the internally controlled event) through positive reinforcement moving from a continuous reinforcement schedule to an intermittent reinforcement schedule. Each student must then evaluate herself against her pre-established performance criteria for success, and avoid comparison with others' performances. Such internally motivated behavior, consequent payoffs, and a sense of personal control serves to reinforce the student's shift in control expectancy (Lao, 1970).

A portion of the Roueche-Mink construct (1976a) as yet undiscussed has special relevance to the adult learner, who

has consistently evidenced an inferior self-concept and high degree of externality at the community college (Bulpitt, 1973). Since the adult learner is socialized to believe that older students cannot re-enter higher education and compete on the same par as younger students, strong external control expectancies persist and achievement is effected accordingly. "Age" is viewed as the indomitable "other" controlling performance. However, consistent with the Roueche-Mink construct, where an individual is particularly resistant to abandoning the belief that contingencies are controlled by chance, powerful others, fate or the unpredictable, the impact of group involvement in reinforcement acts to maximize social learning and facilitate the control expectancy shift (Mink, 1975; Sherman, 1973; Lintner and DuCette, 1974). By engendering peer recognition of academic achievement, the instructor may discreetly involve other adult learners in reinforcing the student's perception of contingency relationships, while at the same time subconsciously facilitating control expectancy shifts within the peers themselves.

The basic Roueche-Mink strategy on altering control expectancy (1975), with its obvious application to adult community college learners, has thusfar undergone only isolated testing (Roueche and Mink, 1976b, p. 38). Their concept of integrated counseling strategies as an effective means to assist adult development of internal control expectancies has, at least on a theoretical plane, received enthusiastic support (Lynch, Ogg,

and Christensen, 1975). However, the Roueche-Mink strategy, the Masters technique, the Adult Nowicki-Strickland I-E Scale, and other recent constructs are only starting points in the search for effective psycho-metric instruments and control expectancy strategies for adult locus of control change (Joe, 1971; MacDonald, 1972). The manifold applications of Rotter's control expectancy theory have received unprecedented attention by researchers in nearly every context other than adult learning. With the dramatic escalation in the number of adult learners returning to education, especially via the community college, the need for a clear understanding of control expectancy in adults has never been more keenly felt. Whether or not that research need is answered may well spell the difference between success or failure in our national imperitive of meaningful life-long learning.

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